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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, TAIWAN'S MILITARY
EXERCISE, INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies all gave front-page coverage May 18 to New York Yankees pitcher Wang Chien-Ming, whose steady performance Wednesday helped his team defeat the Chicago White Sox. News coverage also focused on the DPP's primary results for the year-end legislative elections, on the cabinet personnel reshuffle, and on the 23rd Hankuang Military Exercise. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran an exclusive banner headline on page four that read "[Former Chief of the General Staff] Lee Tien-yu Will Head the Ministry of National Defense." The news story also said Lee's accommodating posture will be conducive to the passage of the U.S. arms procurements budget.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the lethal factor in Taiwan's handling of its foreign relations. The article said Taiwan views the United States as its sole target when handling its foreign relations, which has put the island in a position that is constantly restricted by the United States. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" criticized Taiwan's Han Kuang military exercise, saying the military exercise should "focus on using the available means of defense rather than becoming a showcase for expensive weapons systems the nation does not possess." A column in the centrist, pro-KMT leaning "China Times" discussed inter-Korean relations and said the historic border crossing by North and South Korean trains Thursday will have positive significance for the future normalization of Seoul-Pyongyang ties. End summary.

13. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"Lethal Factor and Reflections on Taiwan's Foreign Relations"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (5/18):

"... There is one lethal factor when it comes to Taiwan's foreign relations: They are directed at the United States only, viewing it as the sole target of the island's foreign relations. The consequence is that it leaves Taiwan no elbow room and no depth strategically and puts the island in a position of being constantly restricted by the United States in all respects. As a result, once the United States, out of its macro-strategic needs, tilts towards China, Taiwan will immediately feel that it has lost its support and will push itself into a corner and not know what to do. Even when it wants to strive to find a way out, it could be insulted and fail because of the United States' suppression. ... Taiwan has violated a major taboo when dealing with its foreign relations; it has lost its useful value and thus makes itself expendable. [Taiwan] should really spend time to contemplate working out viable resolutions with China so as to expand its room and opportunities [in the international community] to gain leverage in the relations among Washington, Beijing, and Taipei."

14. Taiwan's Military Exercise

"Han Kuang: No Guts, All Glory"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (5/18):

"For all their pomp and circumstance, the annual Han Kuang ("Han Glory") series of military exercises are empty theater. The exercises have only marginal value for preparing the armed forces to defend the nation. ... The focus of this year's exercises -- as with most exercises in recent years -- has more to do with the ministry taking on the role of arms-purchase advocate than defender of the realm. Thus, after the computer-simulated war games last week, we heard that the nation needs more anti-missile systems. How fortuitous: the Cabinet just happens to have been pushing the procurement of PAC-3 Patriot anti-missile system for years.

"For military exercises to be useful, they must focus on using the available means of defense rather than becoming a showcase for expensive weapons systems the nation does not possess. Were China to attack, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would unlikely be deterred by the fact that Taiwan is 'in the process' of procuring a coveted weapons system. It is no secret that China is rapidly developing its military into a relatively advanced fighting force, and that Taiwan cannot hope to compete with Beijing on defense spending. But being able to compete with Chinese military spending is not the key to defending Taiwan. The nation's military planners must focus on making the outcome of military action against Taiwan costly and uncertain. There are many ways to do this without having to purchase billions of dollars of expensive foreign military equipment, which would likely be the first items to be targeted in an armed conflict. Taiwan should instead invest in the basics: Training, conventional armaments and infrastructure -- marksmanship, sniper rifles and bunkers, for instance. ..."

15. Inter-Korean Relations

"Significance behind the Border Crossing of Korean Trains' "

The "International Outlook" column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] noted (5/18):

"Trains started running Thursday on two railroads that crossed the border between North and South Korea. ... This development, without a doubt, has positive significance for the normalization of ties between Seoul and Pyongyang. ... Now that Pyongyang is in possession of nuclear weapons, it has full confidence to haggle with Washington over the nuclear issue. Pyongyang also needs to create an image of improved relations with Seoul in an attempt to impose increasing pressure on the United States. Given the complexities of the 'Six-Party Talks,' Pyongyang needs Seoul to tilt toward its side; as a result, the development that is conducive to the [future] normalization of the bilateral relations was naturally a correct course [for Pyongyang] to take. The rail project that has been stalled for a long time has finally come to fruition, and perhaps other developments will ensue. Pyongyang will unlikely give up such an opportunity [for development] while South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun still remains in office."

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